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U. S. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF
MEDICINE

FACTS

U.S. National Library of Medicine

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Public Health Service

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# Facts About the NATIONAL LIBRARY of MEDICINE

Department of
Health, Education, and Welfare
Public Health Service

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# Facts About The
# NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

**Mission:**

The National Library of Medicine has the mission of advancing the medical and related sciences by the collection, dissemination, and exchange of information important to the progress of medicine and public health. In accomplishing this mission, it conducts direct operations relative to the collection, organization and servicing of informational materials, and extramural programs relating to the strengthening and development of medical library services in the United States.

**History:**

The National Library of Medicine was founded in 1836 as the "Library of the Surgeon General's Office" (Army) and developed as a national resource under Dr. John Shaw Billings, Librarian from 1865 to 1895. Named "Army Medical Library" in 1922 and "Armed Forces Medical Library" in 1952, it became an independent administrative unit of the Public Health Service in 1956 with the passage that year of a law initiated by Senator John F. Kennedy and Senator Lister Hill which officially named it the "National Library of Medicine". In 1962, the Library occupied its present building at 8600 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland.

**Collection:**

Holdings of the Library, which represent more than 70 languages, total nearly 1,200,000 pieces—including books, journals, theses, pamphlets, prints, and microfilms—making it the world's largest research library in a single scientific and professional field.

Included in the collection are: 300,000 monographs, 286,000 bound journal volumes, 285,000 theses, 167,000 pamphlets, 3,300 reels of microfilm, and 59,000 portraits and illustrations. Approximately 15,000 serial titles are received currently.

Materials are collected exhaustively in approximately 40 biomedical areas, and

to a lesser degree, in a number of related subject areas, such as general chemistry, physics, zoology, botany, psychology, and instrumentation. The Library acquires new material at the rate of approximately 90,000 items a year.

**Interlibrary Loan:**

The Library provides national and international access to its collection through its interlibrary loan program. Upon request for loans, NLM provides other libraries with single photocopies of articles from journals which those libraries do not possess and which are not available locally. There is no charge for this service, and the photoduplicated material may be retained permanently by the requesting library.

All loan requests must be submitted to NLM by authorized libraries on prescribed forms, giving a complete bibliographic citation for each request. NLM further assists the work of U.S. libraries by lending original volumes.

**MEDLARS:**
**Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System**

As the world's largest biomedical library, the National Library of Medicine has the responsibility for the comprehensive indexing of the world's literature in medicine and biology. It is the only institution in the United States performing this task.

To ensure that the world's biomedical community has bibliographic access to this literature, NLM has for many years published subject indexes, of which the *Index Medicus* is best known. Because of the tremendous growth of the biomedical literature, MEDLARS (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System) was developed to join the intellectual talents of trained literature analysts to the processing capabilities of an electronic computer. The literature analysts review each article to determine how it should be indexed. The data they develop are punched on tapes, input into the computer, and transferred to magnetic tapes for storage and retrieval. Each reel of tape, about 12 inches in

diameter, holds approximately 35,000 bibliographic citations. The input to MEDLARS began in January 1963. MEDLARS does three principal jobs:

*Index Medicus*—The NLM computer is used to process, i.e. compile and print, this *Index,* a comprehensive, monthly, subject-author index to articles from approximately 2,400 of the world's biomedical journals. This process formerly required 22 days per month; with MEDLARS it is now being done in 5 days. Approximately 75 percent of the material in *Index Medicus* comes from journals published outside the United States. Copies of the *Index Medicus* are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, at $3.75 per issue or $40 for a year's subscription. This price does not include the annual *Cumulated Index Medicus,* which is available for purchase through the American Medical Association.

*Recurring Bibliographies*—These are periodically issued lists of citations in specialized medical subject areas such as cancer research, heart disease, mental health, and recent reports on drugs. These specialty listings are compiled at regular intervals from data in the computer store, and printed for distribution by government agencies and non-profit national professional organizations working in the specialty fields.

*Demand Bibliographies*—A major reason for computerizing the Library's information files is to permit rapid machine searching of the computer's data files and provide answers to complex reference questions which cannot be effectively handled by existing printed indexes and catalogs. The results of such searches are called demand bibliographies. By 1969, the MEDLARS computer file will contain over 1,000,000 citations. A simultaneous search of all these citations for answers to as many as 75 different complex reference questions will take less than three hours.

Reports summarizing information from the computer are printed out by two

processes—the high speed printer, which operates at the speed of 21,600 words per minute, and the Graphic Arts Composing Equipment (GRACE), at 3,600 words per minute.

Information on procedures for requesting MEDLARS search services may be obtained from the Chief, Bibliographic Services Division, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, 20014.

*MEDLARS Decentralization*—Duplicate tapes of MEDLARS' holdings can be produced at low costs. As a part of the original plan for the computer system, NLM is planning a program under which these tapes can be made available to educational and research institutions across the country. With proper computer equipment these institutions thus will have the same search capacity as NLM.

**Organization:**

The National Library of Medicine is organized into five intramural divisions and two extramural divisions.

INTRAMURAL PROGRAMS

*The Technical Services Division* manages NLM's international exchange of publications, recommends policy on scope and coverage, acquires and processes all books, periodicals, films, recordings and other library materials pertinent to medicine, organizing such scientific materials by appropriate cataloging.

*The Reference Services Division* provides reference and bibliographic services, administers the interlibrary loan program, maintains and preserves the collection, and controls photographic and photocopying services. Reader and reference services are extended without charge to all qualified organizations and individuals. Originals of portraits, photographs, etchings, and other items in the Library's graphic arts collection are not loaned, but photographic reproductions are made available on a reimbursable basis.

*The Bibliographic Services Division* determines and assigns the subject headings for articles included in *Index Medicus*, formulates searches for the computer,

and prepares abstracts of articles in special subject fields.

*The Data Processing Division* prepares raw data for computer processing, develops new computer programs, and produces bibliographies and the *Index Medicus* by computer.

*The History of Medicine Division* acquires and catalogs medical materials of historical importance. There are approximately 60,000 historical items in its collections, including manuscripts, monographs, graphic material, reference works, and bibliographies. Requests for interlibrary loans are considered on an individual basis; in most cases, if the original cannot be loaned, a microfilm copy will be made. Cost estimates for microfilm or print copies of works in the historical collections are provided upon application. The collections may be consulted at the Library by any responsible investigator.

EXTRAMURAL PROGRAMS

*The Publications and Translations Division* carries out a grant and contract program for support of the publication of critical reviews, directories, abstracts, and bibliographies important to the national health effort, and for support of the translation of foreign biomedical literature.

*The Research and Training Division* fosters programs to train specialists in the communication of recorded medical knowledge and for the support of studies and investigations designed to improve library-related communications functions. Training grants and traineeships in the fields of medical librarianship, biomedical science information specialties, information processing technology, history of the life sciences, and biomedical science writing and editorial services are contemplated.

## Publications Produced or Supported by NLM:

The publications cited below may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, unless

another source is given. Requests for publications distributed by the Library should be directed to the Administrative Office of the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, 20014.

*Index Medicus*—The *Index Medicus* has been published since January 1960 as the successor to the *Current List of Medical Literature*. Subscriptions are $40 a year ($49 foreign). Single copies are $3.75.

*Cumulated Index Medicus*—The American Medical Association publishes annual cumulations of *Index Medicus* under the title *Cumulated Index Medicus*. The 1960, 1961, and 1962 sets (consisting of three volumes each) are out of print. The Association, at 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60610, sells the 1963 issue for $40 ($45 foreign).

*Bibliography of Medical Translations*—A retrospective volume covering the period January 1959–June 1962, this bibliography is kept current by quarterly supplements available at 65 cents. A general subject index to the retrospective volume is available. Single copies of the *Bibliography of Medical Translations* are available from the National Library of Medicine for $2.25.

*Translation Supplement* to the *Federation Proceedings* of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology—This journal, published bimonthly since January 1963, contains selected translations from sciences related to medicine. It is included as a supplement in the regular price of $12 per year for *Federation Proceedings* or as a separate at $10 per year. Single copies are $2. Orders should be placed with the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, 9650 Wisconsin Avenue, Washington, D.C., 20014.

*National Library of Medicine Catalog*—These annual volumes provide an author and subject approach to books and serials cataloged by the Library from 1950 to date. Every fifth year, a 5-year cumulation is published as a supplement to the Library of Congress catalogs.

The 1950–54 *Catalog* (6 v.), published as

the *Armed Forces Medical Library Catalog*, is for sale by J. W. Edwards, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, at $64 per set, f.o.b., Ann Arbor. The 1955–59 *Catalog* (6 v.), is sold by Judd & Detweiler, Inc., 1500 Eckington Place, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20002, at $60 a set, f.o.b., Washington, D.C. The annual *Catalog* for 1960, 1961, and 1963 may be ordered from the Card Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540, at $20.50 per year.

*Catalog Cards*—The Library's multilithed catalog cards are sold only on a current subscription basis by the Card Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 20540. A subscription includes one copy of each card, at a price of 2 cents per card.

*The National Library of Medicine Classification: A Scheme for the Shelf Arrangement of Books in the Field of Medicine and Its Related Sciences*—The third edition of the Library's *Classification* (1964), is available as PHS Publication 1108 for $2.

*Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*—A microprint edition of the *Index-Catalogue*, Series 1–4, 1880–1955, is offered by the Readex Microprint Corporation, 5 Union Square, New York, New York, at $125. Volume XI, Fourth Series, 1955, which is the final volume in traditional form, is available at $9 a copy.

From the files of unpublished entries remaining for the *Index-Catalogue* when the Fourth Series was closed, the Library has prepared and published a three-volume supplementary series (the Fifth Series) listing monographic works published before 1950. The first of these volumes contains the author and title entries, the second and third contain subject entries. These volumes are available at $5.50, $6 and $5.75 respectively.

*Bibliography of Medical Reviews*—This is an annual listing, by subject, of current medical review articles. Volume 6 (1961), is a 5-year cumulation covering material published 1955–60, and is available at $3.50. Volume 7 (1962), and

Volume 8 (1963), are available at $2; Volume 9 (1964), is sold at $1.

*Biomedical Serials,* 1950–60—This is a list of the substantive biomedical serials which the National Library of Medicine holds in issues of the time period named. It cites 8,939 titles and is priced at $3.

*Medical Subject Headings*—The (revised) edition of the Library's subject heading authority list appears annually as Part 2 of the January issue of *Index Medicus.*

The subtitle, "Main Headings and Cross References used in the *Index Medicus* and the *National Library of Medicine Catalog,*" indicates the scope of this publication, which is available separately at $2.25 per copy.

The publications cited serve as the principal keys to the Library's collections. Numerous bibliographies on special subjects have been prepared for distribution. These vary greatly in extent of coverage, and range in size from mimeographed pamphlets to substantial volumes. Among topics covered most recently are: Salmonella infections, toxoplasmosis, Russian surgical stapling apparatus, physiologic involution in aging man, and pulmonary mycotic infection. With a few exceptions, the bibliographies are available on request to the Library.

Other recent and noteworthy publications of the Library are *Guide to Russian Medical Literature* (1958, 40 cents), *Russian Drug Index* (1961), and *Early American Medical Imprints* 1668–1820 (1961, $1).

A complete listing of the Library's publications is available on request.

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